

THE PROGRESSIVE WORLD STRUGGLE OF THE JEWS FOR CIVIL EQUALITY

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most limited. They had no political rights and were thus kept excluded from government employ.

They were denied secondary and university education except to the extent of a very small per cent of their number, and they were so hemmed about with police restrictions as to subject them to oppressive blackmail. The result has been that the great majority of them are ignorant, and even before the war at least a third of them were in direst misery and destitution.

There are in the world over fifteen million Jews. Of these, six millions are to be found in the ten provinces of Russian Poland and the fifteen provinces called "the Pale of Settlement." There are upward of 2,250,000 Jews in Austria and Hungary. There are 615,000 in Germany. There are 270,000 Jews in Great Britain, 100,000 in France, 45,000 in Italy, half a million in Asia, 250,000 in Rumania, and there are 3,300,000 in the United States, of whom a million or more live in the city of New York.

The Jews in the United States, down to 1880, did not exceed a quarter of a million, but since the oppression, pogroms, and massacres in Rumania and in Russia immigration has increased.

The Great Jewish Problem of Today.

As I have said in all parts of Europe and America, except Russia and Rumania, legal discrimination against the Jews has largely ceased and civil equality is accorded them. The present great problem, therefore, is to secure civil equality for them in Rus-

sia and Rumania. How is the present condition in those countries explained?

Prince Gortchakoff in the Berlin Congress described the Russian and Rumanian Jews as a great scourge upon any people. Bismarck's answer was that the policy of restriction had given them the character which is now made the basis for complaints against them.

Mirabeau in the French Assembly said, in answer to a similar charge: "If you wish the Jews to become better men humiliating restriction, open to them every avenue of gaining a livelihood. Instead of forbidding them agriculture, handicrafts, and the mechanical arts, encourage them to devote themselves to these occupations."

Russia's Complaint Against the Jews.

It is probably true that the Russian Jews do devote themselves to trading in money, and that the Russian moujik is subject to abuse in this respect of which the Jews take advantage, but it must be borne in mind that the restrictions upon the Jews as to livelihood have been and are such as to drive them into money-lending. Indeed, this cause dates from the middle ages, when, as already said, canon law forbade among Christians the lending of money on interest and left that business open for the Jews, who perforce became the money-lenders of Europe.

The few avenues of employment for Jews forced them into the conduct of inns and the selling of liquor. This, as I have pointed out, was a heritage from the Polish nobility.

Even if the charge made against the Russian Jews of fraud and trickery

has foundation, it is not to be wondered at, when man's hand is against them, when they are desperate in their efforts to live, when they have a faculty in trade born of the severest necessity. The objection to them that they work together in the interest of each other may well be true. When general society is against them all, they naturally stand together for self-protection and for self-support.

They Make Good Soldiers.

One can hardly expect that they should feel entirely grateful to a government which makes life so hard for them, or that the desire to serve in the army should be strong in them. And yet the reports from the World War indicate that they have made good soldiers, and the history of the Jews in all countries in which they have settled has been that they have rallied to the support of the government under which they lived.

Their patriarch, Samuel of Nehardea, sixteen centuries ago laid down the rule: "The law of the government is the law"; and in the eighteen or nineteen centuries in which the Jews have been wandering over the face of the earth, rebellion and treachery to the government under which they lived have not been frequent among them.

A number of them in Russia under the old regime doubtless had revolutionary and subversive tendencies, apparently confined to Jews of university education, who found difficulty in earning a livelihood under the restrictions and who naturally cherished resentment.

With their active minds, with their genius for trade, cultivated by centuries of necessity, they prefer trade

to manual pursuits, but many of them are skilled artisans in many countries.

Denied Educational Privileges.

They do not follow agricultural pursuits because they have long been forbidden to own land, and by this long deprivation their tastes have been formed for city life. They have been cooped up in ghettos of the city and, perforce, have formed the habits of an urban population.

Denied the opportunity for education, they are ignorant; but no people in the world manifest so much anxiety to secure education and improve the opportunities when offered with such earnestness and success.

It cannot be good for a country like Russian Poland and the Pale to continue 6,000,000 of its inhabitants in such a persistent condition of poverty and demoralization. It must interfere with the proper development, prosperity, and health of the rest of the population. So large a congestion of this kind must make a sore spot in the economic, political, and social life of this part of Russia.

In spite of their deplorable condition and the immigration it stimulates, the Russian Jews are very prolific and their number is not diminishing. Their presence in Russia has been a continuing fact and the policy pursued in respect to them up to the Revolution did not remove it or alter it and it was not a success.

In aid of the Christian peoples of the Balkans and Armenia, the Russian Government did a great work, for which those peoples should be very grateful. The conduct of Russia toward them was in marked contrast to its attitude toward the Jews within its own jurisdiction. Is it too much

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